



Department of Justice

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JURY FINDS TWO WESTERN KENTUCKY DRUG DEALERS GUILTY

Meth had a street value of \$750,000

OWENSBORO, KY - John E. Stewart, age 35, of Central City, Kentucky, and Robert C. Wettstain, age 34, of Owensboro, Kentucky, were found guilty yesterday by a federal jury in United States District Court, Owensboro, Kentucky, of drug trafficking, U.S. Attorney David L. Huber of the Western District of Kentucky and Paul Vido, Special Agent in Charge of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), Louisville Field Division, jointly announced today.

The jury's verdict of guilty was returned following a three-day trial before Joseph H. McKinley, Jr., Judge, United States District Court.

U.S. Attorney Huber said, "This is a great verdict for the law-abiding citizens of Western Kentucky. It is also a model for law enforcement cooperation between federal agents and local police. Together we can put these previously convicted drug dealers away for some real time."

The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Robert J. Kilmartin and it was investigated by ATF and the Audubon Area Gun Task Force (AAGTF), including the Daviess County Sheriff's Office.

Stewart and Wettstain had been tried for conspiring with each other, and two other co-defendants, Wesley Higdon and Jerry Richardson, with the intent to distribute and did distribute methamphetamine with a street value of approximately \$750,000. Higdon, age 28, of Philpot, Kentucky, pled guilty to the charges on September 27, 2007, and is scheduled to be sentenced on January 31, 2008, at 9:30 a.m.; and Richardson, age 28, also of Philpot, Kentucky, pled guilty on December 13, 2007, and is scheduled to be sentenced on March 6, 2008, at 9:00 a.m., in Owensboro, Kentucky.

The four men conspired with each other to distribute crystal methamphetamine. Evidence at trial showed that Stewart was at the top of the pyramid and that he was the source for Wettstain, Richardson and Higdon to purchase crystal methamphetamine which they would, in turn, distribute to low-level users throughout Owensboro, Henderson and Daviess Counties.

The maximum potential penalties are life imprisonment, an \$8,000,000 fine and supervised release for a period of not less than 10 years.

Stewart was previously convicted in Daviess County Circuit Court for (1) possession of a controlled substance (methamphetamine), 1st degree, in September 2000; (2) possession of a controlled substance (methamphetamine), 1st degree, in October 2000; and (3) possession of a controlled substance (methamphetamine), 1st degree, and promoting contraband (methamphetamine), 1st degree, in September 2001. Wettstain was previously convicted in Daviess County Circuit Court for (1) criminal facilitation to manufacture methamphetamine in November 2004, and (2) possession of a controlled substance (methamphetamine), 1st degree, in December 1999.

Stewart and Wettstain are scheduled to be sentenced before Judge McKinley on March 27, 2008 at 9:00 a.m., in Owensboro, Kentucky.

This is a **Project Backfire** prosecution. **Project Backfire** is a partnership of state, local and federal law enforcement which targets violent offenders for prosecution to the fullest extent of state and federal law.

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